

University of Toronto
Faculty of Music
Opera Division

presents



giacomo puccini the Swallow
la rondine

March 2, 3, 4 & 5, 2000

MacMillan Theatre
Edward Johnson Building

Dear Opera Patrons,

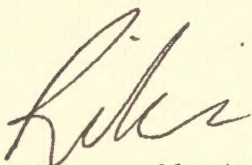
Students and alumni believe that performing major operas in the MacMillan Theatre while studying at the University of Toronto was their *single most significant educational experience providing vital insight into the professional operatic world.*

Until recently, the Opera School was limited to one major production per year — placing at risk the demanding level of training and high standards students and professionals come to expect from the University of Toronto. Since 1997, emergency funding raised from Faculty of Music supporters has secured the production of a second opera. Puccini's *La rondine* is the final opera for which funding is in place.

In order to address the need for *long-term secure financing*, Dean David Beach has set as an immediate academic priority the establishment of an endowed Opera Production Fund of a minimum \$500,000 that will annually generate enough dollars to mount a second fully-staged opera production. To date, over half of the endowment has been raised; we are looking to our friends who believe in arts education to help fulfil our goal. Every gift is eligible for a charitable tax receipt.

For more information about the Faculty of Music's Opera School and the Opera Production Fund, please call Marilyn Brown in the development office, (416) 946-5013. As a supporter of the Opera Production Fund, you will personally be making a tremendous lifelong impact on the performance experience of talented young opera singers!

Sincerely,



Riki Turofsky (DipOpPerf 1970)
Chair – Opera Production Fund Campaign

Opera Production Fund
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Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C5

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la rondine

by **Giacomo Puccini**

libretto by

**Giuseppe Adami, after A.M. Willner
and Heinz Reichert**

<i>Conductor</i>	Raffi Armenian
<i>Director</i>	Maria Lamont
<i>Set Design</i>	William Schmuck
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<i>Assistant Choreographer</i>	Michael Querin
<i>Répétiteurs</i>	Kate Carver, Emily Hamper, Andrea Grant



Surtitles™ first developed and introduced worldwide by the Canadian Opera Company
in 1983. This performance features Surtitles™ written by Gunta Dreifelds.

	March 2 & 4	March 3 & 5
Magda de Civry, Rambaldo's mistress	Katerina Tchoubar	Tina Winter
Lisette, Magda's maid	Mehgan Atchison	Shannon Mercer
Ruggero Lastouc, a young man from the provinces	Timothy Spence	Keith Klassen
Prunier, a poet	Charles Fowler	Peter Collins
Rambaldo Fernandez, a wealthy Parisian banker	Christopher Wilson	Michael Sproule
Yvette } Bianca } friends of Magda Suzy }	Juniper Locilento Colleen Skull Mia Lennox	Virginia Hatfield Suzanne Kilgore Rosalind Lewis
Gobin } Périchaud } friends of Rambaldo Crébillon }	Jason Hales Michael Sproule Sam Chung	James Levesque Jesse Clark Christopher Wilson
Georgette } Gabriella } grisettes Lolette }	Tanya Turner Valerie Mero-Smith Andrea Ludwig	Joni Henson Chia-Jung Lee Michèle Bogdanowicz
A distant voice	Virginia Hatfield	Leslie Ann Bradley
Majordomo	Jesse Clark	Sam Chung

Grisettes, flower-girls, students, waiters, artists and customers at Bullier's
**Catherine Arcand, Rachel Cleland, Julia Halfyard-Martin, Caroline Kuehn, Anick
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Understudy for Magda: Arlene Simmonds



In 1913, Puccini attended the Viennese première of his latest opera, *La fanciulla del West*, at the Hofoper. On an evening off, he went to see an operetta at the Karltheater, whose management seems to have been experiencing phenomenal success — during conversations that evening, he was offered the substantial fee of 200,000 crowns to compose an operetta himself. Always on the lookout for a new project and attracted by the thought of significantly increasing his already great popularity, Puccini accepted. He had been very impressed by the success of Lehár, whose *Merry Widow* had swept the stages of the world since its first performance in 1905. A libretto was provided and translated into Italian for Puccini's benefit; there were to be half a dozen or so songs, a love duet and, of course, some waltzes. As time went by, Puccini decided against the operetta form with its spoken dialogue and resolved (even though it meant more work) to use the libretto as the basis for a through-composed opera. A more serious difficulty arose with the outbreak of the Great War, in which Austria and Italy were on opposing sides. Eventually, the première of *La rondine* was given in neutral Monte Carlo in 1917.

Despite the lack of spoken dialogue, many traces of the operetta project remain. Like *The Merry Widow*, *La rondine* is set in Paris, with a big night-club scene, and the score is full of waltzes. The maid Lisette, as soon as she dresses in her mistress's finery for a night on the town, begins to merge with the character of Adele in *Die Fledermaus*. In a more general way, the musical style is subtly different from that of Puccini's preceding operas. Even for a composer with such a gift for melody, tunes pour out in unusual profusion — and they are more straightforward, operetta-like tunes than we find in *Bohème* or *Butterfly*. The orchestration has a gentler luminosity to it and a harder *verismo* edge never emerges, except in a few brief passages of Act III which teeter on the brink of tragic drama. It is, perhaps, not fanciful to see a parallel with Richard Strauss's development from *Salome* and *Elektra* towards *Der Rosenkavalier*. In fact, Puccini said he wanted to write 'a comic opera, like *Rosenkavalier* except more amusing and more organic'(!)

The première in Monte Carlo was a success, but subsequent performances in Italy were not well received; *La rondine* slipped into the position of being the least performed of the composer's operas after *Le villi* and *Edgar*. Some misguided attempts have been made to increase its acceptability by tinkering with the dramatic framework. But Puccini himself never ceased to hope that the opera's unique and gentle manner would come to be appreciated in theatres of a sufficiently intimate size — like our MacMillan Theatre.

Act I

In an elegant salon in Paris, Magda de Civry is entertaining a group of friends. Included among the guests are her wealthy lover, Rambaldo Fernandez, and Prunier, a poet and a wit about town. Prunier is amusing the ladies with tales of the latest fad sweeping Paris — Sentimental Love. Magda's maid Lisette interrupts the conversation to ridicule Prunier's argument. Prunier performs a song which tells the story of Doretta, who rejects the affections of a king for a simple life. Magda then improvises the next verses, in which Doretta kisses a handsome student and is transformed by the power of passion and love. Magda confides in her friends that she is unhappy with her life of wealth and indulgence, and recounts a memory from her youth when she had a one night love affair with a student at Bullier's Dance Hall. Prunier offers to read Magda's palm, and tells her that, like the swallow, she will migrate towards a land of dreams and love, but once there, she will be faced with a choice. Ruggero Lastouc, a young man just arrived in Paris, arrives to meet Rambaldo. Rambaldo asks the guests to recommend a night spot to send Ruggero, and Lisette enthusiastically suggests Bullier's. After the guests have left, Magda also decides to go to Bullier's, dressed up like the young girl of her memories. In the empty salon, Prunier meets with Lisette, dressed up in her mistress's finery. The two confess their love for one another — they too leave for Bullier's.

Intermission

Act II

At Bullier's students, grisettes, shopgirls, artists, demimondaines, and curiosity seekers revel in the Parisian evening. Magda arrives (in disguise as Paulette), and is immediately accosted by four students. Pressed to explain herself, she claims to be meeting someone — and spots Ruggero sitting alone at a table. Magda and Ruggero find themselves drawn to one another, though he does not see through her disguise. As waltz music begins, they leave to join the dancing. Lisette and Prunier arrive amid the hoopla of the dance. After dancing, Magda and Ruggero have a drink, and Magda is struck by the similarities between that evening and one one years ago when she was a young girl. Magda and Ruggero confess their attraction to each other and seal their feelings with a kiss. Lisette and Prunier stumble across the lovers, and Lisette tries to avoid her mistress. However, the quick-witted Prunier plays along with Magda's game, and convinces Lisette that the lady in question is not her mistress, but "Paulette". They join Ruggero and Magda for a toast to love. Rambaldo arrives and confronts Magda. She decides to leave him for Ruggero — and the two new lovers depart together in the Paris dawn.

Intermission

Act III

In their rented home on the Côte d'azur, Ruggero and Magda exchange passionate vows of love. They have been living quietly together away from society for several months, and have many debts. Ruggero confesses that he has written to his father for financial help, and also for permission to marry her. Left alone, Magda agonizes over the news – although they are lovers, Ruggero still does not know the whole truth of her past as a courtesan. Lisette and Prunier arrive. Prunier has come to deliver Lisette back to Magda after Lisette's disastrous debut as a "singer" at the theatre in Nice the previous evening. He also tells Magda that Rambaldo knows of her troubles and wants her back. As he leaves, Prunier makes up with Lisette. Ruggero receives a letter from his mother giving him permission to marry "a good and pure woman". Magda can no longer keep up the deception, and realizes that their lives and expectations are too far apart to continue their relationship. With a broken heart, she ends the relationship with Ruggero and leaves with Lisette.



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MacMillan Theatre



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